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***The Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature.* Edited by Ian Brown and Alan Riach. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010. ISBN 9780748636945. 272pp. pbk. £21.99.**

Ian Brown and Alan Riach's edited collection is a great addition to the Edinburgh University Press's Companions series. This collection not only fits the bill in terms of a comprehensive, illustrative range of discussions which give the reader a deep sense of Scottish writing in the twentieth century, but it also offers thought-provoking and engaging perspectives on that terrain which go beyond a mere guide and provide a set of snapshots of luring intellectual pathways. The introduction sets out the stall really effectively with reference to MacDiarmid's sense of the Irish Literary Revival as far as it granted a model for Scottish practice. In particular, the editors in their introduction establish the spirit of the whole collection by disputing T.S. Eliot's assertion – which had longstanding canonical currency – that Scottish literature never really existed, that it was and is a regional appendage of an overarching English literature. The editors insist, with reference to Cairns Craig's work, that the fact that Scottish literature has many voices and many constituencies testifies not to its weakness but to its strength. Eliot's position, which can also be traced in a Scottish writer and critic such as Edwin Muir, asserted that the heterogeneity of Scottish literature was a sign that it didn't really add up to the homogeneity and unity supposedly required by a proper nation. Instead, as this collection indicates, that multiplicity helps redefine what a nation is and can be. Scottish literature, as Cairns Craig would have it, is an agreement to disagree, an ongoing dispute that recalibrates the model of any national tradition that would claim that unity is the ultimate tendency of literature in a national context.

As this collection makes clear, it is not just differences between Gaelic, Scots or English, but also a range of issues concerning region, class, gender, religion, empire etc. that demonstrate the impacted, energetic dynamics of Scottish writing. In terms of the individual contributions, Cairns Craig's 'Arcades – The Turning of the Nineteenth Century' is a brilliant recovery of writing in the 1870s-1920s period that contests the idea that this era was one of stagnation or cosy comfort in abeyance of modern pressures. As Craig shows, a range of writing in this juncture – via developments in Scottish science – actually dismantled a settled sense of material reality in highly radical ways. So rather than Scottish literature in this period being not able to handle too much reality

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(hence the self-sustaining critical myth of the Kailyard), this period witnesses a profound undermining of the tents of realism and its governance of reality. As Craig conceives it, this is not a period of quaint withdrawal but a direct subversion of modes of literary reality and realism.

Murray Pittock's 'Scotland, Empire and Apocalypse – From Stevenson to Buchan' is a terrific rethinking of Stevenson and Buchan with direct reference to empire and habituated views of each writer as, respectively, a producer of simple adventure stories or a straightforward racist and imperialist. Pittock's analysis challenges the easy assumptions of both positions with nuance and verve. Trevor Royle's 'Literature and World War One' offers a great appraisal of how the changes wrought by the Great War enabled a renegotiation of cultural values that drove MacDiarmid and the Renaissance. Similarly, Alan Riach's 'Arcades – the 1920s and 1930s' recuperates an era of innovation and renewal. Donald Smith and Ksenija Horvat provide a rich reading of Scottish drama. Roderick Watson traces a thorough interrogation of identity in the 1920–1945 period, while Douglas Gifford's contribution on Scottish writing and World War Two is really comprehensive and illuminating.

Moir Burgess lucidly discusses the 1940s and 1950s, John Corbett proffers a deep reading of language in the work of MacDiarmid and W.S. Graham, and Bernard Sellin offers an insightful account of post-war fiction. Moving to the present, Ian Brown and Colin Nicholson rediscover the 1960s and 1970s, Carla Sassi addresses the issue of borders in Scottish writing with prescient attention to post-devolution identity, while Robyn Marsack treats contemporary poetry with lucidity and perception. Michelle Macleod enhances Gaelic poetry beyond nostalgia or loss with great use of Irish parallels in Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's aesthetic, Michael Gardiner offers a shrewd and sophisticated reading of literature in the 1980s and 1990s, and Marie Odile Pittin-Hédon engages the much neglected area of popular and genre fiction in a Scottish context. Finally, Donny O'Rourke examines contemporary poetry through a post-Edwin Morgan lens, and Ian Brown's closing piece on entering the twenty-first century very astutely focuses the whole collection in its sense of an open, plural set of possibilities fermenting in Scottish writing. Never settled and always unsettling, Scottish writing, as brilliantly captured in these essays, continues to provoke and engage. This is a really great, resourceful and illuminating book.

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